

2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

Southeast Oklahoma Enterprise Community

After years of hard work and a lot of determination, the Southeast Oklahoma Enterprise Community made continued progress in 2000 with several long-awaited projects finally starting to be realized. And, as has been said, "Success follows success" and that is apparent in our Enterprise Community. As we slowly begin to improve the infrastructure in our community, with improved water and sewer systems; more housing; better roads; etc., we are experiencing additional growth in the form of major chains locating or expanding in our community.

The Southeast Oklahoma Enterprise Community created new partnerships in 2000 as well as strengthened existing ones. Through these partnerships, much has been accomplished. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has been one of our strongest partners and has played a vital role in the area's improved economy. A partnership between USDA/Rural Development, Oklahoma's Department of Commerce, Little Dixie Community Action Agency and the Choctaw Nation has resulted in more than \$1.1 million dollars being allocated specifically for economic development activities. Initially, the program has created six jobs. These employees will pursue economic development activities in an 11-county area of Southeast Oklahoma.

A groundbreaking ceremony for a "state of the art" rehabilitation facility occurred in 2000. This \$17 million facility, made possible by a loan guarantee through USDA/RD will create 200 jobs for the area. The creation of that many jobs will have a significant impact on our area's economy. The facility will serve trauma patients who have suffered spinal cord injuries. This project was one of the first economic development activities pursued following designation. SSBG/EC economic development funds were expended on this project. It has been more than five years since work began on the project and the Enterprise Community encountered one roadblock after another. But the Enterprise Community didn't give up and the hard work finally paid off.

Other major projects in 2000 included the opening of the new Little Dixie NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center; funding approval for renovation of a historic hotel for elderly housing; a million dollar restoration project for a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma cultural and tourist attraction; and a \$72 million highway improvement project.

The HomeOwnership Center is a partnership of Little Dixie Community Action Agency, HUD, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corp., Local Initiative Support Corp. (Rural LISC) and FannieMae Foundation.

Formal announcement of an approved \$72.4 million four-lane highway finally came early in October. The new four-lane is expected to be completed within the next five years. This is a major part of the Enterprise Community's strategic plan.

The Southeast Oklahoma Enterprise Community strategic plan is more than 80% complete with four years of designation remaining. We have leveraged more than \$70 million dollars not including the \$72 million allocated for Highway 70 improvements. The Southeast Oklahoma Enterprise Community residents are dedicated to the implementation of the area's Strategic Plan. Our accomplishments thus far provide the proof. This area of the state is receiving long overdue recognition and assistance. We strongly believe in and support the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community initiative. This program provided our community and others with incentives that have led to these tremendous improvements and successes. Witnessing the positive changes in our community has kept the residents motivated and

active participants in the effort.